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ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

“He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

(John 20:22)

At Pentecost, we see a group of people whom we have come to know quite well through the Gospel stories; but now we see them doing things we would never have believed they were capable of. Our Gospel reading today tells us what has happened to them to make that possible.

We see them sitting in their usual meeting place, with the doors locked, afraid that they will suffer some terrible repercussions from Jesus’ death. We have no idea how realistic their fears are; possibly, they don’t know either. If they were truly afraid, then it seems a bit stupid of them to be sitting, most of them together, in the place where they were known to meet. And that suggests that at least some of their fear is generated by their loss and their shame.

Without Jesus, they don’t know what to do.

He shows them his wounds, so that they know it is really him, and then he breathes on them. God the redeemer breathes new life into people emptied of all hope, and new life comes into existence.

When we see the disciples step out on the Day of Pentecost, full of the courage and joy of the Holy Spirit, they are speaking from their own experience of what God has done: he has re-created them.

The disciples are now genuinely changed people.

From Pentecost onwards, these people left their locked rooms and went out, preaching, teaching, healing, courting the danger they had previously so feared. Immediately after Jesus’ crucifixion they may or may not have been in danger, but as their mission continued the danger was very real. Yet they, and generations of those who believed because of their testimony, were no longer afraid.

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Our journey here in this Chaplaincy over these past months has been a difficult time and brings us to this day of Pentecost.

When I arrived on Lanzarote fourteen months ago we set about fulfilling the mission of the Church here as we developed a strategy to welcome the visitor whilst also caring for those who are resident. Our ecumenical experiences were incredible with a working relationship with our neighbours in Christ which many would never have thought possible.

Then in March this wretched virus struck. Our residents locked down. Some of our regular 'swallows' instead of returning to the UK and Ireland were forced to stay here – away from family and friends. Churches closed – and all that seemed so dear to us – denied us for week after week.

My task as a priest was completely restrict to telephone contact and online communication. I had looked forward so much to our Good Friday stations of the cross – and Easter Services, all physically impossible. But nothing is impossible if only we turn to our Lord in prayer and go where he leads.

From the depths of despair – our virtual services have brought so many to see Lanzarote as a fountain of Hope. Every week over 500 view our services and then have responded in such positive ways that our hearts are lifted. Christians of all ages have responded to us, so much so that we now plan, even after the restrictions are lifted, to continue our link by having a monthly celebration online. From this very day, new life has been breathed into us – and we are ready to meet the challenge.

To each one of us, like those first disciples, Jesus comes and breathes new life into us as His Holy Spirit fills us with the unquenchable life of God – the life of the resurrected Jesus standing in our midst. And we, filled with joy, are commissioned to go out and share what we have been given, calling others into God's new creation, full of the life of the Holy Spirit.

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Luke in writing Acts must have found it so difficult to put into words the happenings – as of fire, appeared among them.

The reading from Acts this morning indicates the scale of the change in people when the Holy Spirit is at work.

This new world order as detailed in our reading repudiates sectarianism and racism and the dominance of the rich and powerful – it asserts the dignity and worth of every single child and every nation.

That happens when the Holy Spirit is allowed into the hearts of minds of men and women. The same change as witnessed in those early disciples locked in their hideaway was desperately needed in the Church today because it is uncomfortable with change. If only we could let go and decide what it means to be Church in our world today – not locked away in our buildings – but outward looking for Jesus reminded us that we should ‘Go – and make disciples of all nations’.

Let us go forward today – a changed people – with our hearts on fire with love for the one who is our strength – and in the power of His spirit may our lives be changed and re-energised so that others will want to know what this love is and what it is that makes us tick.

For people will know that we are His disciples by the way that we love one another – let His love through the power of the Holy Spirit spill over onto those who are around us and those we meet and greet through these coming days. Fan the flame of faith – and be alive.

As we will sing in the last verse of our final hymn today:

*Lord for ourselves / In living power remake us / self on the cross
and Christ upon the throne / Past put behind us, for the future take us: /
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.*